

Preprimary education enrollment

Participating in early childhood programs such as Head Start, nursery school, prekindergarten, and kindergarten can better prepare a child to enter first grade. Many policymakers and educators believe that it is important to help all children start elementary school on an equal footing with other children. Involving students in preprimary programs beginning at earlier ages may provide these students with valuable experiences that will help them start elementary school better prepared to learn.

- Preprimary enrollment rates for 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds were higher in 1996 than in 1991. In 1996, 37 percent of 3-year-olds, 58 percent of 4-year-olds, and 90 percent of 5-year-olds were enrolled in preprimary education.
- In 1996, similar percentages of white and black 3- and 4-year-olds were enrolled in center-based programs, while their Hispanic peers were less likely to be enrolled (see supplemental table 1-1).
- Three- and 4-year-olds from families with incomes of more than \$50,000 were more likely than 3- and 4-year-olds from families with incomes of \$50,000 or less to be enrolled in preprimary education.
- There was a positive relationship between parents' educational attainment and the enrollment rates of 3- and 4-year-olds: as parents' educational attainment increased, so did the preprimary enrollment rates of their children. However, enrollment rates of 5-year-olds were similar, regardless of their parents' educational attainment.

Percentage of 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds enrolled in center-based programs or kindergarten,¹ by selected student characteristics: 1991, 1993, 1995, and 1996

Selected student characteristics	3-year-olds				4-year-olds				5-year-olds			
	1991	1993	1995	1996	1991	1993	1995	1996	1991	1993	1995	1996
Total	31.4	34.1	37.4	36.7	52.7	55.3	60.9	57.7	86.4	90.0	90.3	90.2
Race/ethnicity												
White	33.4	33.7	40.2	39.6	52.4	53.7	60.8	58.8	85.7	88.9	88.6	88.8
Black	31.6	41.9	41.1	40.5	57.4	62.9	68.2	67.8	92.3	93.2	93.7	94.1
Hispanic	19.8	27.2	21.2	22.1	47.5	48.9	49.0	45.3	85.3	91.4	93.4	90.4
Household income												
\$10,000 or less	25.4	32.7	26.2	26.0	43.3	52.6	54.3	52.7	86.1	89.2	90.9	92.7
10,001–20,000	23.2	21.6	27.0	28.0	45.0	47.2	52.3	45.3	84.6	90.4	89.7	87.6
20,001–35,000 ²	21.3	22.2	27.7	30.8	48.0	47.8	49.7	50.6	85.1	86.8	90.7	87.8
35,001–50,000 ²	33.4	37.9	38.1	42.2	52.3	57.2	59.5	58.2	87.3	90.6	88.5	89.7
50,001 or more	52.9	58.7	61.2	55.0	74.8	73.2	80.7	75.8	89.0	93.7	90.9	92.8
Parents' highest education level												
Less than high school diploma	17.3	17.1	16.0	³ 22.0	33.1	42.8	³ 42.4	³ 47.3	85.5	79.9	92.5	90.3
High school diploma or GED	23.0	23.0	26.3	28.9	40.8	43.2	51.1	47.3	84.8	89.0	89.2	89.9
Some college/vocational/technical	31.0	35.9	35.6	34.5	56.3	61.1	63.3	59.8	87.7	91.1	90.2	88.6
Bachelor's degree	41.5	41.1	51.7	49.6	67.2	64.1	70.7	62.6	88.1	92.5	91.6	92.6
Graduate/professional school	53.0	61.9	³ 60.8	60.4	72.0	73.3	77.9	78.1	87.0	94.3	89.8	92.1
Family structure												
Two biological or adoptive parents	—	34.4	38.6	38.0	—	55.1	61.3	57.8	—	89.1	88.8	89.0
One biological or adoptive parent	—	33.8	36.9	37.3	—	57.2	63.0	58.4	—	92.1	94.0	91.9
One biological/adoptive and one step parent	—	³ 32.7	³ 23.1	³ 14.7	—	³ 49.5	³ 46.9	³ 45.8	—	87.3	89.4	93.2
Other relatives	—	³ 34.8	³ 20.8	³ 23.1	—	³ 52.2	³ 61.3	³ 55.9	—	³ 92.6	³ 88.0	96.5

— Not available.

¹ See the glossary for definitions of center-based programs and kindergarten.

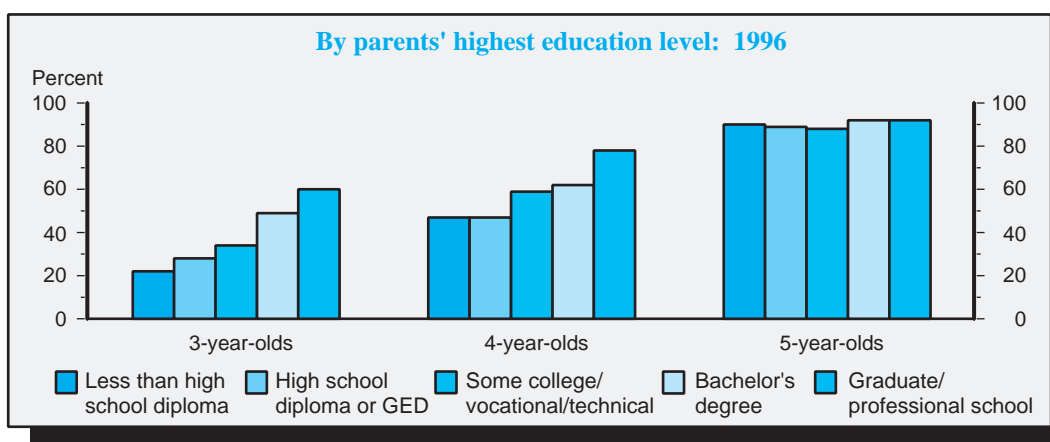
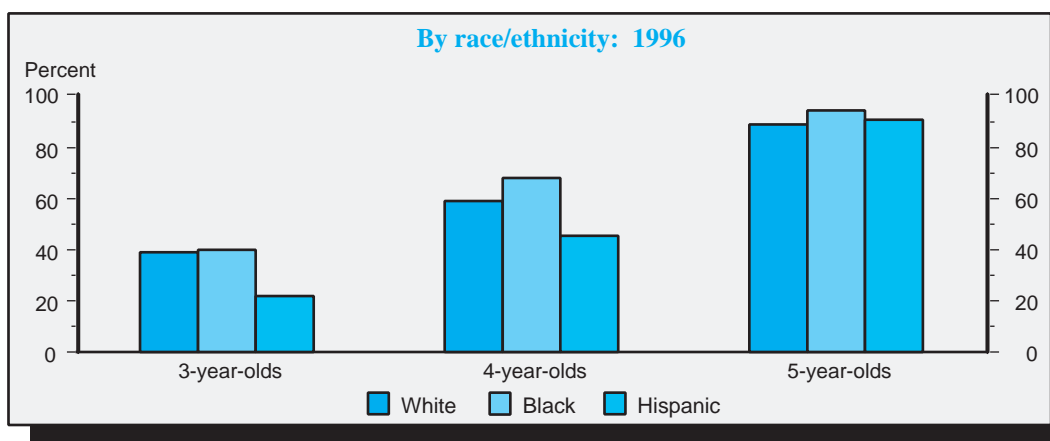
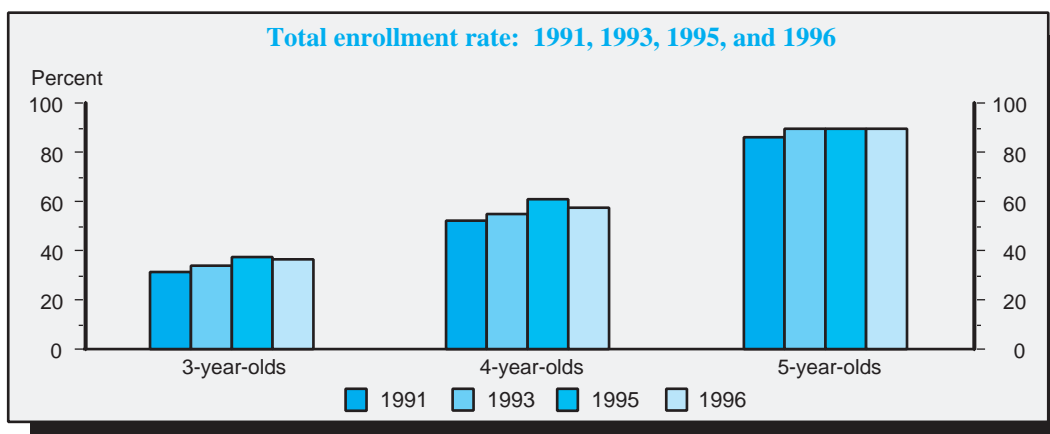
² The middle two income ranges in 1991 were \$20,001–30,000 and \$30,001–50,000, respectively.

³ Interpret with caution; standard errors are large due to small sample sizes.

NOTE: Included in the total but not shown separately are children from other racial/ethnic groups and other types of family structures. This analysis includes children ages 3–5 who were not enrolled in first grade. Age is as of December 31 of the prior year.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Education Survey (NHES), 1991 (Early Childhood Education File), 1993 (School Readiness File), 1995 (Early Childhood Program Participation File), and 1996 (Parent and Family Involvement in Education File).

Percentage of 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds enrolled in center-based programs or kindergarten*



* See the glossary for definitions of center-based programs and kindergarten.

NOTE: Included in the total but not shown separately are children from other racial/ethnic groups. This analysis includes children ages 3–5 who were not enrolled in first grade. Age is as of December 31 of the prior year.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Education Survey (NHES), 1991 (Early Childhood Education File), 1993 (School Readiness File), 1995 (Early Childhood Program Participation File), and 1996 (Parent and Family Involvement in Education File).

Table 1-1 Percentage of 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds enrolled in center-based programs or kindergarten,¹ by selected student characteristics: 1996

Selected student characteristics	3-year-olds			4-year-olds			5-year-olds		
	Total	Center-based programs	Kindergarten	Total	Center-based programs	Kindergarten	Total	Center-based programs	Kindergarten
Total	36.7	35.8	0.9	57.7	54.4	3.2	90.2	18.7	71.6
Sex									
Male	37.4	36.4	0.9	58.9	54.8	4.1	90.3	15.9	74.5
Female	36.1	35.2	0.9	56.5	54.1	2.4	90.1	21.4	68.7
Race/ethnicity									
White	39.6	39.1	0.5	58.8	56.5	2.3	88.8	20.7	68.1
Black	40.5	38.2	2.2	67.8	62.0	5.8	94.1	15.8	78.3
Hispanic	22.1	22.1	0.0	45.3	41.0	4.2	90.4	14.4	76.0
Household income									
\$10,000 or less	26.0	24.9	1.1	52.7	48.5	4.2	92.7	12.6	80.1
10,001–20,000	28.0	26.6	1.4	45.3	40.5	4.8	87.6	24.1	63.5
20,001–35,000	30.8	29.5	1.3	50.6	49.4	1.2	87.8	16.0	71.8
35,001–50,000	42.2	42.1	0.1	58.2	54.6	3.7	89.7	18.4	71.4
50,001 or more	55.0	54.4	0.6	75.8	72.6	3.2	92.8	21.3	71.5
Parents' highest education level									
Less than high school diploma	² 22.0	² 18.4	3.5	² 47.3	41.0	6.3	90.3	13.4	² 76.9
High school diploma or GED	28.9	27.9	1.0	47.3	43.7	3.6	89.9	18.3	71.6
Some college/vocational/technical	34.5	34.0	0.5	59.8	57.3	2.5	88.6	19.5	69.1
Bachelor's degree	49.6	48.9	0.7	62.6	60.2	2.4	92.6	20.0	72.6
Graduate/professional school	60.4	60.4	0.0	78.1	75.5	2.6	92.1	19.9	72.2
Family structure									
Two biological or adoptive parents	38.0	37.1	0.9	57.8	54.9	2.9	89.0	18.9	70.1
One biological or adoptive parent	37.3	36.5	0.7	58.4	54.5	3.9	91.9	18.4	73.4
One biological/adoptive and one step parent	² 14.7	² 14.7	0.0	² 45.8	² 41.7	4.0	93.2	² 16.4	² 76.8
Other relatives	² 23.1	² 18.0	² 5.0	² 55.9	² 51.1	4.8	96.5	² 18.8	² 77.6
Mother's first language									
English	39.0	38.4	0.6	59.7	57.1	2.7	89.8	19.6	70.1
Spanish	² 19.6	² 18.0	1.7	41.5	35.6	5.9	94.2	11.7	82.5
Other	² 37.1	² 31.7	5.4	² 55.3	² 49.3	6.0	² 80.4	12.2	² 68.2
Poverty status ³									
Poor	24.4	22.7	1.7	50.2	45.5	4.7	89.6	16.1	73.5
Non-poor	41.0	40.4	0.7	60.1	57.4	2.7	90.4	19.3	71.0
Mother's employment status									
35 hours or more per week	44.2	42.3	1.9	59.5	55.3	4.2	90.2	18.0	72.2
Less than 35 hours per week	45.0	44.5	0.5	63.7	61.5	2.3	91.8	19.8	72.0
Looking for work	² 32.4	² 29.8	2.6	² 58.2	² 53.8	4.4	92.2	² 20.5	² 71.7
Not in labor force	26.9	26.9	0.1	52.8	50.7	2.1	87.6	18.2	69.4

¹ See the glossary for definitions of center-based programs and kindergarten.

² Interpret with caution; standard errors are large due to small sample size.

³ The poverty measure presented in this analysis was developed by combining information about household composition and household income. See the supplemental note to this indicator for further discussion.

NOTE: Included in the total but not shown separately are children from other racial/ethnic groups and other types of family structures. This analysis includes children ages 3–5 who were not enrolled in first grade. Age is as of December 31, 1995.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Education Survey (NHES), 1996 (Parent and Family Involvement in Education File).

Note to Indicator 1: Preprimary enrollment rates

Age of the child

For this analysis, the age of the child was calculated as of December 31, 1990 for 1991 data; as of December 31, 1992 for 1993 data; as of December 31, 1994 for 1995 data; and as of December 31, 1995 for 1996 data.

Enrollment rates

The numerator used to calculate the enrollment rates for this analysis is the number of 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds who were enrolled in center-based programs or kindergarten as of December 31, 1990, 1992, 1994, and 1995. The denominator used is the total number of children who were ages 3, 4, and 5 as of December 31, 1990, 1992, 1994, and 1995. Children who were enrolled in first grade or higher, or who were in the “ungraded” category, were excluded from this analysis.

Race/ethnicity

A child’s race/ethnicity is determined by the composite of the National Household Education Survey (NHES) variables “race” and “Hispanic.” If the child’s ethnicity was Hispanic, he or she was classified as Hispanic, regardless of whether his or her race was classified as white, black, or other. Children of “other” race/ethnicities were included in the totals but were not shown separately in this analysis.

Parents’ highest education level

“Parents’ highest education level” is defined as the highest education level of the child’s parents or nonparent guardians who resided in the household. It is based on the highest education level of the mother or female guardian or the highest education level of the father or male guardian. If only one parent resided in the household, that parent’s highest education level was used.

Poverty measure

The poverty measure used in this analysis was developed by combining information about household composition and household income.

Household composition is the count of family members based on the relationship among the household members. The number of family members is the number of persons in the immediate family of the child (e.g., parents, siblings, and the child him/herself). If the child had no parents in the household, the total number of household members was used.

Household income was also used as part of the poverty measure. NHES collects data on household income in increments. Information on the actual household income, which was available for about 7 percent of the population, was also used. Because actual household income was not available in most cases, the measure is an approximation. Households were categorized as “poor” if they met one of the following conditions:

- 2 family members and the household income was \$5,000 or less;
- 2 family members and the actual household income was less than \$10,000;
- 3 family members and the household income was \$10,000 or less;
- 3 family members and the actual household income was less than \$12,000;
- 4 or 5 family members and the household income was \$15,000 or less;
- 5 family members and the actual household income was less than \$18,000;
- 6 or 7 family members and the household income was \$20,000 or less;
- 7 family members and the actual household income was less than \$23,000;
- 8 family members and the household income was \$25,000 or less; or
- 9 or more family members and the household income was \$30,000 or less.

This information was available in 1993, 1995, and 1996 only.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Education Survey (NHES), 1991, 1993, 1995, and 1996.

Table S1 **Standard errors for the text table in *Indicator 1***

Selected student characteristics	3-year-olds				4-year-olds				5-year-olds			
	1991	1993	1995	1996	1991	1993	1995	1996	1991	1993	1995	1996
Total	1.2	1.2	1.5	1.3	1.2	1.1	1.5	1.3	0.7	0.8	0.8	1.0
Race/ethnicity												
White	1.3	1.3	2.3	1.9	1.3	1.3	2.0	1.8	0.9	1.1	1.0	1.4
Black	3.7	3.4	4.2	4.4	3.8	3.5	4.3	3.5	1.6	1.8	2.4	1.9
Hispanic	2.6	3.2	2.5	3.4	3.7	3.3	2.9	3.8	2.4	2.2	1.7	2.8
Household income												
\$10,000 or less	3.3	3.9	3.8	3.2	3.9	2.8	4.0	4.6	2.2	2.6	2.8	3.2
10,001–20,000	2.6	3.4	3.7	4.2	2.8	2.9	4.1	4.3	1.9	2.3	2.6	3.2
20,001–35,000	1.8	2.0	2.8	3.0	2.5	2.3	2.8	2.5	1.9	1.6	1.5	2.2
35,001–50,000	1.9	2.7	3.4	3.9	1.9	2.9	3.0	3.7	1.3	1.7	2.1	2.0
50,001 or more	2.4	2.1	3.0	2.8	2.2	2.0	2.3	2.4	1.4	1.1	1.6	1.6
Parents' highest education level												
Less than high school diploma	2.9	4.0	3.7	5.9	3.9	4.5	5.9	5.0	2.5	4.0	2.5	4.1
High school diploma or GED	1.8	2.1	2.5	2.5	2.1	2.1	2.7	3.2	1.4	1.5	1.6	2.1
Some college/vocational/technical	2.2	2.1	2.6	2.5	2.1	2.0	2.8	2.7	1.5	1.8	1.7	2.0
Bachelor's degree	3.1	3.3	3.6	3.9	2.4	2.9	3.6	3.7	2.0	1.8	1.6	2.4
Graduate/professional school	3.4	3.2	5.0	4.6	3.5	3.1	3.1	3.5	2.3	1.3	2.9	2.7
Family structure												
Two biological or adoptive parents	—	1.4	1.8	1.5	—	1.5	1.7	1.7	—	0.9	1.0	1.4
One biological or adoptive parent	—	3.0	3.2	3.3	—	2.4	3.3	3.2	—	1.7	1.3	2.0
One biological/adoptive and one step parent	—	7.0	8.8	8.5	—	6.2	6.6	9.7	—	3.9	4.7	2.7
Other relatives	—	9.5	7.3	8.0	—	10.9	10.2	13.0	—	6.5	7.8	3.0

— Not available.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Education Survey (NHES), 1991 (Early Childhood Education File), 1993 (School Readiness File), 1995 (Early Childhood Program Participation File), and 1996 (Parent and Family Involvement in Education File).